

Office of Current Intelligence

Draft, 29 July 1953

NSC Briefing

Known facts regarding Soviet bomber aircraft larger than the TU-4:

The first sighting of an aircraft larger than the TU-4 medium bomber was made at the Moscow airshow in July 1951. The fly-past was led by a single aircraft believed to be a heavy bomber approximately one-third larger than the TU-4. Photographs were taken and the aircraft was subsequently designated the "Type 31." Since that time an intensive effort has been devoted by Western intelligence to learning details of the aircraft and its production.

However, on 29 April 1953 US Air Attache observed a large aircraft, tentatively identified as a "Type 31," descending toward an airfield in Moscow. Three other sightings during June and July have resulted in the tentative identification of a minimum of seven "Type 31" aircraft at another field in the Moscow area; the

Intelligence derived from original sighting of the "Type 31:"

In the absence of definite information, the capabilities of the "Type 31" heavy bomber have been estimated on a tentative basis. If powered by four turbo-prop engines, the aircraft would have a combat range of 6,650 nautical miles and a combat radius of 3,420 n.m., carrying a 10,000 pound bomb load. This compares with the TU-4's range of 3,100 n.m. and radius of 1,700 n.m. with the same bomb load. Prior to the recent sightings, it was estimated that up to five "Type 31" aircraft had been produced.

Draft of Special Estimate 36/1, Soviet Capabilities for Attack on the United

States through Mid-1955, dated 14 July 1953, treats the heavy bomber as follows:

DIA review(s) completed.

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"A prototype heavy bomber has been observed and was probably powered by piston engines.... A recently reported sighting of several of these aircraft is not yet fully confirmed. This sighting, if fully confirmed, would indicate that at least pre-series (i.e., experimental) production has begun. It seems safe to assume that the USSR is planning to replace the TU-4 piston medium bomber with aircraft of higher performance characteristics. The following table...is based, therefore, on the assumption that the USSR has begun production of a heavy bomber...."

ESTIMATED ACTUAL STRENGTH, LONG RANGE AIR FORCE (exerpt)

	Mid-1953	Mid-1954	Mid-1955
Heavy Bomber	Few	30	150

Additional considerations regarding the recent sightings:

The aircraft recently sighted in Moscow have not been definitely identified as heavy bombers. The only feature observed was the vertical stabilizer; the engines and other parts of the aircraft could not be observed. The B-50 version of the US B-29 (from which the TU-4 was copied) is characterized by somewhat more powerful engines, requiring a larger vertical stabilizer. A modified TU-4 could have been sighted by the Attaches in Moscow, and in the absence of other intelligence it is not believed that a positive conclusion can yet be made regarding the production of heavy bombers in the USSR. The aircraft recently sighted may have been practicing for the annual Moscow airshow, reportedly to be held in August this year. A firmer identification of these aircraft may be obtained at the time of the airshow.